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United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains an account of the activities undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa to implement its mandate during the period from July 2006 to June 2007.

During the reporting period, the lack of funding, in particular core funding, continued to hamper the Centre's ability to fulfil its mandate and respond to requests for assistance from Member States in the region. Nevertheless, the Centre undertook new initiatives and projects in the field of security sector reform and practical disarmament for which specific funding was received.

The Consultative Mechanism for the Reorganization of the Centre, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/86, concluded its work by making concrete recommendations on the Centre's future work programme, as well as on its staffing and funding, with a view to revitalizing the Centre.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/93, by which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Consultative Mechanism for the Reorganization of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa to continue its work, including reviewing the mandate and programmes of the Regional Centre in the light of developments in the field of peace and security in Africa since its establishment, with a view to identifying concrete measures to revitalize the Centre, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the necessary support to the Regional Centre for better achievements and results; to facilitate close cooperation between the Regional Centre and the African Union, in particular in the areas of peace, security, disarmament and development, and to continue to provide assistance towards stabilizing the financial situation of the Centre; and to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session on the implementation of the resolution. The report covers the period from July 2006 to June 2007. A financial statement on the status of the Trust Fund for the Centre for 2006 is contained in the annex.

II. Functioning of the Centre

2. The Regional Centre was established in 1986 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/151 G. Located in Lomé, the Centre functions within the framework of the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, which ensures its supervision and acts as the focal point for coordinating the input of the pertinent organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system. With the exception of the post of the Director (P-5), which is funded through the regular budget of the United Nations, the daily operations of the Centre and all its activities rely solely on voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors.

3. During the reporting period, voluntary contributions in support of the activities of the Regional Centre continued to decline and remained insufficient for the Centre to fulfil its mandate effectively and efficiently. Within its limited financial and human resources, the Centre implemented its programme of work in the following main areas: peace and security; disarmament and arms control; outreach and information; and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and other entities.

III. Objectives and activities of the Centre

4. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/151 G, the Regional Centre is mandated to provide, upon request, and in cooperation with the African Union, substantive support for initiatives and other efforts of the Member States of the African region towards the realization of measures of peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region, as well as to coordinate the implementation of regional activities in Africa.

5. During the reporting period, the Centre carried out activities in the four areas mentioned in paragraph 3 above.

A. Peace and security

6. During the reporting period, the Regional Centre initiated a project entitled "African security sector reform programme: the promotion of civil-military relations in Togo", with partial funding provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It is being implemented as a pilot project in Togo with a view to improving the relationship between the military and civilians, thereby contributing to strengthening security and stability in the country. The main activities of the project include a campaign of sensitization and awareness-raising; the organization of a national forum for dialogue to improve the relationship between civilians and the military; the organization of a training workshop for members of the Togolese armed and security forces on maintaining order and peace; the elaboration of a code of conduct for the those forces; and the organization of a training seminar for Togolese parliamentarians on defence and security policies and practices.

7. The Regional Centre also initiated a project entitled "Capacity-building on practical disarmament and peacebuilding: strengthening grass-roots organizations". Covering all 16 West African States, the project is aimed at building the capacity of West African civil society, in particular grass-roots organizations, so as to enable them to effectively carry out activities in the areas of small arms and light weapons, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacemaking and peacebuilding processes through practical disarmament measures. In the framework of that project, the Regional Centre developed a curriculum for the training of trainers, which is intended to serve as a working document for a workshop scheduled to be held in Lomé in November 2007. The workshop is designed to provide civil society grass-roots organizations with modern tools, techniques and technical skills to enable them to contribute actively and more effectively to the strengthening of peace, security and stability in the subregion.

8. The Regional Centre provided substantive support to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa[1] at its twenty-fourth ministerial meeting, held in Kigali from 25 to 29 September 2006. The major objective of the Committee is to promote peace and security in the subregion through confidence-building measures, including arms limitation and disarmament. It is composed of the 11 States members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). During the meeting, the Centre made presentations on various disarmament issues concerning the subregion.

9. In 2007, the Regional Centre was entrusted with the task of serving as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. In this capacity, it participated in the organization of the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting, held in Sao Tome from 14 to 18 May 2007. The following member States attended the ministerial meeting: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe. The delegation of Chad transmitted its contribution to the Chairman of the Committee. The Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi and the

[1] The member States include Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo participated as observers. Among the topics discussed were the security and political situation in certain member countries, the consequences of the crisis in Darfur and the evolution of security in the Great Lakes region. The meeting also encouraged a more effective partnership between ECCAS and the United Nations. The twenty-fifth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa concluded with the adoption of the Sao Tome initiative, proposed by President Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes. The initiative called for the elaboration of a legal instrument for the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and of a code of conduct for armed and security forces in the Central African subregion. Further, the meeting unanimously recognized the need for countries in the subregion to jointly examine issues of cross-border security, and decided to do so in the context of the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting, in order to begin to develop a concerted approach (see A/62/96). The twenty-sixth ministerial meeting is scheduled to be held in Yaoundé from 3 to 7 September 2007.

B. Disarmament and arms control

Weapons of mass destruction

10. The Regional Centre provided support for the first African seminar on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in cooperation with the Government of Ghana, which was held in Accra on 9 and 10 November 2006. Twenty African States and two African subregional organizations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States, were represented. Representatives of France, Kazakhstan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the European Union, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Customs Organization and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons also participated in the seminar.

Small arms and light weapons control

11. The year 2006 witnessed some important developments at the subregional level in Africa in the area of the elaboration of standards for controlling the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons. Two legally binding instruments were adopted: the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, in May 2006;[2] and the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms, Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, in June 2006. Upon entering into force, the ECOWAS Convention will replace the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in member States.

[2] Available at http://www.saferafrica.org/DocumentsCentre/Books/NairobiProtocol/NairobiProtocol.pdf.

12. At the request of ECOWAS, the Centre participated in the drafting of the Convention. The Director of the Centre also chaired the ECOWAS group of independent experts established to review the draft convention. In addition, in June 2006 the Centre provided technical expertise to the ECOWAS experts and at ministerial meetings, in preparation for the Conference of Heads of State and Government, at which the ECOWAS Convention was adopted.

13. In June 2006, the Centre participated in the launch of the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP), a five-year project to provide technical and operational support to national commissions, security personnel and civil society organizations throughout the subregion that are involved in combating the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.

14. In February 2007, the Centre participated in the first international consultative conference on ECOSAP, which adopted a set of standard operational procedures for the implementation of the Programme. The Centre, together with UNDP, ECOSAP management and the ECOWAS small arms unit, serves as a member of the ECOSAP Technical Committee, which examines and approves all project proposals submitted to ECOSAP by national commissions and civil society organizations.

15. The Regional Centre continued to maintain and operate a small arms and light weapons register for Africa with a view to promoting confidence-building and transparency in arms transfers among the participating States. The Centre donated computers and printers to participating States in support of their capacity-building efforts. It also initiated and published an inventory of national arms production capacities in nine participating States (Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Togo) with the aim of laying the foundation for processes to regulate local arms production in those countries.

C. Outreach and information

16. During the period under review, the Regional Centre launched a new, and more interactive website in English (www.unrec.org). The website provides a comprehensive electronic information reference system on peace and disarmament issues in Africa and serves as a reference point for interested States, media, research entities, non-governmental organizations and others. The new website contains the latest news on and information about events relating to disarmament, peace and security issues in the African region. It has also created an electronic discussion forum on the Internet, allowing users around the world to interactively explore disarmament, peace and security issues, particularly as they relate to Africa.

17. The Regional Centre organized several youth forums in Togo with graduate and undergraduate students, to discuss a wide range of issues, including the challenges of disarmament in Africa, armed conflict and international human rights law and the problem of child soldiers.

D. Cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and other entities

18. The Regional Centre is in the process of finalizing a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the

general secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States in the fields of security, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Within this cooperation framework, and as part of the work of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the Centre and ECCAS will jointly undertake two projects: the elaboration of a legally binding instrument for the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa; and the elaboration of a code of conduct for security and defence forces in that subregion.

19. The Regional Centre also began developing a partnership with Interpol in the field of capacity-building programmes on investigative techniques relating to firearms. In this context, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean organized, in Lima, in October 2006, a workshop on lessons learned with a view to transferring relevant knowledge and experience from Latin America and the Caribbean to Africa.

IV. The operational situation of the Centre

A. The financial situation

20. During the period under review, some funds were received for the execution of new projects. However, the complete lack of core funding, combined with the limited financial resources earmarked for project-related activities, continued to jeopardize the operations of the Centre. That situation was further aggravated by the rise in the cost of fuel and by currency fluctuation.

21. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Cameroon and of France, as well as to Oxfam GB and UNDP in Togo for their financial contributions to, and support for, the activities of the Centre. His gratitude goes also to the Government of Togo for hosting the Centre. The Secretary-General expresses his hope that the pledge of financial support made by the Government of Togo during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly will be implemented in time to provide support for the operations of the Centre. Information on the status of the Trust Fund for the Centre for 2006 is contained in the annex.

22. Despite the decision of the Executive Council of the African Union (EX.CL/243(VIII)Add.7), adopted in Khartoum in January 2006, in which it appeals to member States to make voluntary contributions to sustain the viability of the Centre, no such funding has been received to date.

B. Staffing

23. During the reporting period, owing to the receipt of some funds earmarked for specific project-related activities, the Centre was able to recruit a number of staff to assist in the execution of those activities. They include an Associate Expert (funded by the Government of the Netherlands), four fixed-term staff members, five service contract holders and a locally recruited short-term consultant. The Centre also benefited from the assistance of interns, most of whom were assigned to research and project-support tasks.

V. Consultative Mechanism for the Reorganization of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

24. During the reporting period, the Consultative Mechanism for the Reorganization of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa continued its work. It held three meetings in New York — on 16 February, 26 April and 12 June 2007 — under the chairmanship of Coly Seck of Senegal, following the departure in February 2007 of Chuka Udedibia of Nigeria.

25. On the basis of previous discussions and working papers, the Chairman presented a paper containing recommendations on the future programme of work of the Centre, as well as on its staffing and funding. At the meeting held on 12 June 2007, the Consultative Mechanism reached agreement on those recommendations and adopted the Chairman's paper for subsequent transmittal to the General Assembly.

26. During the discussions of the Consultative Mechanism, it was agreed that the mandate of the Centre, as set out in General Assembly resolution 40/151 G, remained valid. With regard to the future programme of work of the Centre, the Consultative Mechanism recommended that the Centre focus on aspects of its mandate that are priorities for African States as well as for the international community. In this connection, specific issues identified in the programme of work included small arms and light weapons, in particular capacity-building and requests for assistance from African States; the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures; capacity-building for African States in their implementation of international legal instruments in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as of relevant United Nations resolutions; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; the African security sector reform programme; and the prevention of the dumping of nuclear, radioactive, chemical and other hazardous waste in Africa.

27. On the structure of the Centre, the Consultative Mechanism recommended that three new posts, namely, for one Political Affairs Officer, one Administrative Assistant and one Librarian, be established, funded from the regular budget of the United Nations.

28. On the important issue of funding, the Consultative Mechanism requested the Secretary-General to appeal for voluntary contributions from Member States and other donors to a special fund set up in support of the operations and activities of the Centre. It also recommended that a similar fund be established by the African Union for the same purpose.

VI. Conclusion

29. During the reporting period, the lack of a reliable source of funding, in particular core funding, continued to hamper the Centre's ability to fulfil its mandate effectively and respond to requests for assistance from Member States in the region. Notwithstanding that fact, the Centre undertook new initiatives and projects in the field of security sector reform and practical disarmament for which specific funding was received.

30. The Secretary-General wishes to draw the attention of Member States to the recommendations made by the Consultative Mechanism for the Reorganization of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and urges Member States to seriously consider those recommendations.

Annex

Status of the Trust Fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for 2006[a]

	United States dollars
Fund balance, 31 December 2005	273 906
Income, 1 January-31 December 2006	
Voluntary contributions[b]	102 256
Funds received under inter-organizations arrangements	86 729
Interest income	20 172
Other/miscellaneous income	157 529
Subtotal	**640 592**
Expenditures, 1 January-31 December 2006	294 940
Fund balance, 31 December 2006	**345 652**

[a] Information based on the statement of income and expenditure for the 12-month period ending 31 December 2006. In 2006, contributions were received from Cameroon ($1,663), France ($100,593) and UNDP in Togo ($86,729).

[b] During the period from 1 January to 30 June 2007, additional contributions totalling $243,839 were received from Cameroon ($3,914), France ($102,287) and Oxfam GB ($137,638).